(c) whether it is a fact that the NHAI is exploiting innocent people in Andhra Pradesh by extracting high tolls;

(d) the steps Government would take to reduce the toll charges on NH-5 in Andhra Pradesh; and

(e) the steps proposed to reduce burden on the public?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF SHIPPING, ROAD TRANSPORT AND HIGHWAYS (SHRI K.H. MUNIAPPA): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. Dr. P. Pulla Rao, President Road Safety Forum represented that toll charges being levied by National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) have no rational basis. According to him, the toll rates are very high. He wants to know the reasons for high toll rates, and so many toll gates.

(c) to (e) No, Sir. It is not a fact that NHAI is exploiting the innocent people. The toll charges are as per approved policy of Government.

Cost of constructing NHs

2571. SHRI V. HANUMANTHA RAO: Will the Minister of SHIPPING, ROAD TRANSPORT AND HIGHWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the costs of road construction per mile on the National Highway system are one of the highest in the world;

(b) whether it is a fact that the Road Safety Forum has suggested more competition by making the contract distances smaller;

(c) whether it is a fact that a monopoly and coordinated tendering has emerged on the bidding for contracts in the National Highway system;

(d) whether Government would carefully consider the suggestions of the Road Safety Forum to increase genuine competition among the road contractors; and

(e) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF SHIPPING, ROAD TRANSPORT AND HIGHWAYS (SHRI K.H. MUNIAPPA): (a) 4-laning projects on National Highways are awarded on the basis of international competitive bidding and no such comparative figures are readily available.

(b) Information is being collected.

(c) No such case has been reported.

(d) There is already genuine competition among road contractors because of the competitive bidding.

(e) Does not arise.